

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claims 1-20 are pending in this application. Claims 1, 3, 5, 6 and 13 are herein amended, claim 2 is canceled and new claims 21-24 are added. The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1.(currently amended) An optical element characterized by being disposed in a second container wherein the second container is disposed inside a first container, and by having an inside ambience independent from ~~an outside of the~~ ambience of the first container, and by being rinsed by irradiation with ultraviolet rays from a light source outside the container.

2. (cancelled)

3. (currently amended) An optical element according to claim 1 ~~or 2~~, wherein irradiation of the ultraviolet rays is carried out while the container is filled with a gas containing oxygen.

4. (original) An optical element according to claim 3, wherein irradiation of the ultraviolet rays is carried out while a casing accommodating the light source and the container is filled with an inactive gas such as nitrogen.

5. (currently amended) An optical element according to any one of claims ~~1-3~~ 1 and 3, wherein said optical element is made of at least one of fluorite and quartz being usable in a wavelength region of 200 nm or less.

6. (currently amended) An optical element according to any one of claims ~~1-5~~ 1, 3 and 4, wherein the ultraviolet rays contain light of a wavelength of 300 nm or less.

7. (original) An optical element according to claim 6, wherein the ultraviolet light is omitted from a low-pressure Hg lamp.

8. (original) An optical system characterized by including at least one optical element as recited in claim 7.

9. (original) An exposure apparatus characterized by including an optical system as recited in claim 8.

10. (original) A rinsing system, characterized by;
a first container;
a light emitting unit disposed inside said first container, for emitting ultraviolet rays; and
a second container disposed inside said first container and arranged so that said light emitting unit is outside said second container, said second container being adapted to accommodate therein an article to be rinsed and also to enable irradiation the article with ultraviolet rays from said light emitting unit, said second container further being adapted to maintain an ambience different from that of said first container.

11. (original) A rinsing system according to claim 10, wherein the article is a light transmission

type optional element.

12. (original) A rinsing system according to claim 10, wherein the article is made of one of quartz and fluorite and wherein the article is an optical element adapted to be used in a wavelength region of 200 nm or shorter.

13. (currently amended) A container for a rinsing system, characterized by:
a second casing for accommodating therein an article to be rinsed, said second casing being disposed inside a first casing and being adapted to maintain an ambience different from ~~an~~ outside the ambience of the first casing; and
a glass window mounted on said second casing, for enabling irradiation of the article with ultraviolet rays from the outside of the second casing.

14. (original) A container according to claim 13, wherein the article is a light transmission type optical element.

15. (original) A container according to claim 13, wherein the article is made of one of quartz and fluorite and wherein the article is an optical element adapted to be used in a wavelength region of 200 nm or less.

16. (original) A rinsing method, characterized by:
a first step for accommodating an article, to be rinsed, into a second container disposed inside a first container and being adapted to maintain an ambience different from that of the first container;
a second step for introducing a rinsing gas into the second container; and
a third step for irradiating the article with ultraviolet rays from a light source disposed inside the first container but outside the second container.

17. (original) An exposure apparatus having an optical element rinsed in accordance with a rinsing method as recited in claim 16.

18. (original) An apparatus according to claim 17, wherein the optical element is adapted to be used in a wavelength region of 200 nm or less.

19. (original) A device manufacturing method, characterized by:
a first step for exposing a photosensitive member with a device pattern by use of an exposure apparatus as recited in claim 17 or 18; and
a second step for developing the exposed photosensitive member.

20. (original) A method of producing an optical element, characterized by:
a first step for preparing an optical element; and
a second step for cleaning the prepared optical element in accordance with a rinsing method as recited in claim 16.

21. (new) An optical element according to claim 1, wherein the second container has an internal pressure higher than the first container.

22. (new) A rinsing system according to claim 10, wherein the second container has an internal pressure higher than the first container.

23. (new) A container according to claim 13, wherein the second casing has an internal pressure higher than the first casing.

24. (new) A rinsing method according to claim 16, wherein the second container has an internal pressure higher than the first container.